

Message Text

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NSO LA MADDALENA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 8656

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, IT

SUBJECT: LA MADDALENA PX AND COMMISSARY

1. EMBOFFS MET WITH CHIEF OF MFA NATO OFFICE (DA RIN) ON JUNE 22 AT HIS REQUEST FOR LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF LA MADDALENA PX/COMMISSARY IMPASSE. (THIS FOLLOWED DEMARCHE ON SUBJECT DCM MADE TO VICE DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS). ONE OF REASONS FOR MEETING WAS TO FORESTALL OUR TRANSMITTING NOTE VERBALE ON ISSUE. DA RIN SAID NO RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL IN FOREIGN OFFICE WOULD SIGN A LETTER TO THE MAYOR CONFIRMING OUR RIGHT TO OPERATE SUCH STORES NOW THAT THE MFA AND MOD HAVE EXAMINED THE PERTINENT AGREEMENTS MORE CLOSELY. HE ASSERTED THAT THE BIA WAS IRRELEVANT IN THIS CASE SINCE THERE IS NOT "INSTALLA-

TION" AT LA MADDALENA. ONLY THE TENDER ITSELF, HE CONTENDED, IS COVERED BY THE BIA. THIS HE SAID WOULD BE THE GOI REPLY WERE WE TO SEND THEM A NOTE VERBALE CITING THE BIA AS THE BASIS FOR OUR RIGHT TO OPERATE THE STORES. EMBOFF REMINDED DA RIN OF THE GOI'S
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AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE TO AN EMBASSY MEMORANDUM OF 1973 WHICH, INTER

ALIA, SOUGHT GOI APPROVAL OF ESTABLISHMENT OF NAVY SUPPORT OFFICE FOR LONG RANGE DEPENDENT SUPPORT, AND WHICH HAD SPECIFICALLY INFORMED THE GOI THAT THE USN WOULD BE OPERATING A PX AND COMMISSARY. DA RIN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE GOI HAD APPROVED THE SUPPORT OFFICE AND SAID THAT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HAD BEEN REMISS IN NOT RECOGNIZING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STORES. NEVERTHELESS, HE SAID THAT SOMETHING MORE THAN OUR EXCHANGE OF INFORMAL MEMORANDA WOULD BE NEEDED TO CONFER THE "REQUISITES OF EXTRATERRITORIALITY" ON DUTY FREE STORES ON ITALIAN SOIL. THIS HE EMPHASIZED WAS THE CRUX OF THE PROBLEM--NOT THE LOCAL POLITICAL SITUATION ON THE ISLAND. (EMBOFF HAD REMARKED EARLIER THAT WE HAD HEARD INFORMALLY THAT THE MAYOR WAS WELL-DISPOSED TOWARDS THE RE-OPENING OF THE STORES, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE THE DC IN LA MADDALENA AND THE MAYOR'S FACTION IN PARTICULAR HAD DONE SURPRISINGLY WELL IN THE RECENT SARDINIAN ELECTIONS.) DA RIN NOTED THAT DEFENSE MINISTER ANDREOTTI WAS OF LIKE MIND ON THE LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE ISSUE, AND THAT ANDREOTTI HAD DISCUSSED PROBLEM WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER AT NPA MEETING. SECDEF TOLD ANDREOTTI, ACCORDING TO DA RIN, THAT HE WOULD REQUEST CONCERNED MILITARY AUTHORITIES TO WORK TO ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY LOCAL IRRITANTS ON THE ISLAND.

2. DA RIN SAID THAT ANDREOTTI HAD SUGGESTED THAT THE USN OVERCOME THE LEGAL PROBLEM BY APPLYING FOR A VENDOR'S LICENSE, AS PROVIDED FOR UNDER ITALIAN LAW. EMBOFF REPLIED THAT WE PROBABLY WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH THE PROSPECT OF US FORCES IN ITALY APPLYING TO A LOCAL POLITICAL ENTITY FOR RIGHTS WHICH ARE IMPLICIT IN THE BASIC GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT. DA RIN SAID HE APPRECIATED THIS, AND ADDED THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE LICENSE ROUTE TO BE THE BEST PERMANENT SOLUTION, AS A LICENSE COULD BE CANCELLED AT ANY TIME BY THIS OR ANY OTHER MAYOR.

3. DISCUSSION THEN TURNED TO WHERE WE GO FROM HERE. DA RIN NOTED THAT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE WAS PRESENTLY CONSIDERING THREE ALTERNATIVES, ALL OF WHICH INVOLVED MOVING THE PX AND COMMISSARY FROM THEIR PRESENT LOCATION. FIRST AND MOST DESIRABLE FROM THE ITALIAN POINT OF VIEW WOULD BE TO OPERATE THE STORES ON THE TENDER ITSELF. THIS, SAID DA RIN, WOULD OVERCOME THE LEGAL ISSUE AND ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEM OF VISABILITY. THE SECOND WOULD BE TO OPERATE THE STORES OUT OF THE NCO CLUB WHICH COULD BE GRANTED BIA COVERAGE BY AN AMENDATORY PROTOCOL. THE THIRD ALTERNATIVE WOULD

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BE TO RELOCATE THE STORES TO THE NATO FACILITY ON THE ISLAND OF SANTO STEFANO. DA RIN WAS UNCERTAIN ON THIS POINT BUT ASSUMED THIS WOULD MEET "EXTRATERRITORIAL" REQUIREMENT.

4. EMBOFF RESPONDED THAT HE HAD GRAVE DOUBTS THAT THE TENDER HAD THE NECESSARY ROOM AND FACILITIES FOR A PX/COMMISSARY OPERATION MORE THAN THE RAZOR BLADE/TOOTHPASTE VARIETY. SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT MIGHT ALSO INTERFERE WITH THE SHIP'S TENDING OPERATION. EMBOFF

SAID THE NCO CLUB IDEA STRUCK HIM AS PERSONALLY APPEALING EXCEPT THAT IT HAD NOT YET BEEN CONSTRUCTED. REGARDING THE NATO SITE ON SANTA STEFANO, EMBOFF SAID THIS ALTERNATIVE APPEARED TO HIM AT FIRST BLUSH TO BE UNSATISFACTORY BECAUSE OF ITS DISTANCE FROM THE HOMES OF MOST DEPENDENTS AND THE LIKLIHOOD THAT MULTIPLE FERRY CROSSINGS WITH AUTOMOBILES WOULD BE REQUIRED. EMBOFF ASKED DA RIN ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF RELOCATING THE STORES TO EITHER THE SARDINIAN MAINLAND OR TO ANOTHER LOCATION ON THE ISLAND OF LA MADDALENA FURTHER OUT FROM THE TOWN AS A TEMPORARY AD HOC EXPEDIENT, PENDING THE INCORPORATION OF THE PERMANENT SITE IN THE BIA VIA AND AMENDATORY PROTOCOL. DA RIN SAID HE WOULD PASS THESE SUGGESTIONS ON TO THE MOD FOR CONSDIERATION. MANWHILE, EMBOFF PROMISED TOTRANSMIT DA RIN'S THREE ALTERNATIVES TO APPROPRIATE US AUTHORTIES FOR COMMENT. THEY AGREED TO CONSULT AGAIN IMMEDIATELY AFTER DA RIN'S TRIP TO BRUSSELS FOR THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT.

5 THE ITALIANS OBVIOUSLY HAVE A REASONABLE AGRUMENT ON THE APPLICABILITY OF EXISTING AGREEMENTS TO THE PX AND COMMISSARY. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THEIR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO GET THE STORES OUT OF DOWNTOWN LA MADDALENA. ASSUMING THIS TO BE THE CASE, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO US TO REACH SOME COMPROMISE, I.E., TO RELOCATE THE STORES. WE WOULD APPRECIATE THEREFORE COMMENTS ON THE THREE ALTERNATIVES THE ITALIANS ARE EXAMINING AND ON THE TWO WE SUGGESTED. WITH RESPECT TO THE LATTER, WE DOUBT THAT MOVING THE STORES TO THE MAINLAND WILL BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOI. RELOCATING THEM IN A TEMPORARY BUILDING OUT FROM TOWN PENDING COMPLETION OF THE NCO CLUB, WHICH WOULD BE ADDED TO THE BIA, STRIKES US AS THE MOST ATTRACTIVE OPTION IF THE GOI BUYS IT. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE A READING ON THE PROPRIETY OF OUR APPLYING FOR A LOCAL LICENSE TO OPERATE THE STOES UNTIL THE PERMANENT SITE CAN BE INCLUDED IN THE BIA.

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6. COMMENT: THE PX AND COMMISSARY ISSUE WILL EVENTUALLY BE RESOLVED ONE WAY OR ANOTHER TO OUR MUTUAL SATISFACTION. THIS IS NOT OUR GREATEST CONCERN. RATHER, IT IS THE LACK OF POLITICAL COURAGE EXHIBITED BY OUR DC FRIENDS IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND MOD AND THEIR WILINGNESS TO CAVE BEFORE LOCAL POLITICAL PRESSURES. WE HOPE LA MADDALENA IS A SPECIAL CASE BECAUSE OF ITS SIZE AND THE ATTENDANT IMPACT OF OUR PRESENCE THERE, AND THAT THE FUTURE DOES NOT SEE SIMILARY SITUATIONS DEVELOPING OVER OUR MILITARY ACTIVITIES ELSEWHERE IN ITALY. WE THINK NOT, BUT WE CANNOT BE AS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT LA MADDALENA. EVEN WITH THE BEST EFFORTS OF THE NAVY, FURTHER PROBLEMS ARE ALMOST INEVITABLE GIVEN THE INTERNAL POLITICS OF THE ISLAND AND THE CONTINUING FRAGILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT IN ROME. VOLPE

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